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"There must also be a great deal of improper management, to say the least of it, in the purchase of flour, the transportation of it, packing, &c. &c. which I cannot pass over in silence, as it really calls for strict examination. A pood of flour that costs only fifty to sixty kopecs at Irkutsk, and is generally sold at Yakutsk at a rouble to a rouble and a half, stands the Government, by the time it arrives at Ochotsk (one thousand and twelve versts), nearly ten roubles per pood. To carry five poods and thirty pounds of this flour to Ochotsk, contracts are made with the Yakuts at eighty or eighty-five roubles, and sometimes more, per horse; this being a horse's load. Now I have been confidently informed, that the Yakuts seldom receive much more than one half of that sum; the rest being divided amongst the officers of Government! There is also much to be altered in the manner of transporting the flour on the Lena and to Ochotsk. Flour is generally sent down the Lena in large square flat-bottomed vessels called barques, in bulk; and, as it is often badly dried, it heats, becomes bitter, and loses much of its nutritious quality. When it arrives at Yakutsk it is thrown into magazines, also in bulk, where it becomes [25] further heated, and is more or less spoiled. (1) If it were sent in

1. As I have been three times at Yakutsk, and lived there once for ten months, the reader will perceive that I speak of those matters from my own experience.

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bags from Irkutsk it would be much better preserved, and the additional cost would be trifling, as the bags would serve many years in succession. At Yakutsk the flour is packed into leathern bags, called sumas, made of ox-hides untanned, but dressed white, and the hair taken off. To pack the flour into them tightly, so that each suma shall contain two poods and thirty-five pounds, it is necessary to wet them; the flour that adheres to the wet suma dries and becomes as hard as a stone, and is thus rendered impenetrable to all sorts of weather; so that if the suma be good there cannot be a safer mode of conveying the article; but unfortunately the sumas that are now contracted for at about two roubles and a half a-piece, are so thin and bad, that the flour often spoils, and the sumas only serve for a season or two, instead of lasting four or five years, as was formerly the case. It would be cheaper to pay five roubles for a good strong suma, that would last several years, than to buy such trash because it is cheap. However, it would of course [26] prove less profitable to the parties concerned, if the sumas were good and the contracts fewer. During five years residence in Kamtchatka, I paid from eleven and a half to twelve roubles and sixty kopecs a pood for the rye-flour I consumed; and I never saw a suma that was not either bitter-flavoured, tasting of the leather, or having sand mixed with it. One additional cause, however, of the spoiling of the sumas must be mentioned, because it proceeds from neglect. That there are rats in the magazines at Ochotsk and Kamtchatka arises from their not having been properly built. The floors and ceilings should be either composed of solid square

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birch logs, laid close together, or else lined with sheet-iron. Either of these methods would effectually keep out the rats; but neither will be adopted at Kamtchatka as long as the Government is in the habit of allowing ninety poods of flour (1) annually for the

1. I have since heard that the Government of Irkutsk has at length refused to allow rations to the rats of Kamtchatka.

consumption of those animals, many of whom I believe, if the truth were known, have only two legs! Their getting into the transports is owing to the neglect of the commanders, who do not take the [27] necessary precautions to prevent them; or if they get in, surely a good ~~smoking~~ would destroy them in a few hours. If there were not a great deal of improper management and bad conduct, surely the flour might be carried cheaper, and be sold for much less than twelve roubles and sixty kopecs at Kamtchatka. "